

Is the Lord Limited?

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of limiting God's power through unbelief and the importance of being open to His work in our lives.

Duration: 28:56

Scripture: Psalm 78:41, Isaiah 59:1, Zechariah 4:6, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Hebrews 13:8, James 4:7

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the danger of limiting the work of God in our lives through unbelief, restrictions, and attempts to control or manipulate God's message. It highlights the importance of being open to God's Spirit, allowing Him to work freely in and through us, and not putting limitations on what God desires to do. The speaker urges the congregation to seek a deeper surrender to God, to be willing vessels for His power and truth in a world that desperately needs it.

Transcript

For our scripture reading today, let's turn to Psalm 78 and we'll begin reading at verse 37 and we'll go down to verse 47. I'll read the first and unnumbered verses, 37, and we ask you to join together as you read the even-numbered verses. Shall we stand for the reading of God's Word? For their heart was not right with him, and neither were they steadfast in his covenant.

But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not. Yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

And how he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zon. And had turned their rivers into blood, and their floods that they could drink water. And he sent diverse sorts of flies among them that devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them.

He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with ale, and their sycamore trees with frost. Let's pray.

Father, we look at the way you are dealing with your people, and we marvel at their hardness of heart. How that in all of these things, Lord, they did not surrender themselves to you. And Lord, we thank you for your graciousness toward them, remembering that they were just but dust.

And Lord, though they turned their back and tempted you, yet they put the limits on what you could do. May we not be guilty of that. Lord, may we this day just leave it open that you can do all that you're desiring to do in our lives.

May we not put on the brakes, may we not put limitations. But Lord, may we be open to all that you're wanting to do for us. We ask in Jesus' name, and for his sake.

Amen. You may be seated. Well, we've come to the book of Micah, and so we encourage you to read it over.

Tonight, we'll be looking at the book of Micah and this prophet, and we will just go through the whole book of Micah this evening. But this morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the second chapter, verses 6 and 7, where the Lord said, Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? This morning, we see how that man so often is seeking to conform God into his image, rather than seeking to be conformed into God's image. Man so often is seeking to restrict what God has to say to him.

There in verse 6, they were saying, Prophecy not. The question I want you to think about today is, Am I guilty of trying to restrict God's word or God's work in my life? He is addressing his message to, O thou who art named by the house of Jacob. There in verse 7. The irony of this address.

They have the name, the house of Jacob, but they're not following in the steps of their father, Jacob, who had a true relationship with God. They were still known as the house of Jacob, but they were far from the God of Jacob. You know, it's interesting.

The name Christian was first there in the book of Acts in the city of Antioch, a name that they called the believers in Jesus Christ. It was sort of a slam, actually. It wasn't intended to be a compliment to them.

They just said, Well, they are Christ-like. They are Christians. And it was just sort of a put-down.

But it was something that caught on. And it's good if the world can recognize that. I think for us to go around saying, Well, I'm a Christian, can oftentimes be a hindrance if we're not living like one.

Better that we be identified by the world as a Christian because they see the Christ-likeness in our lives rather than us advertising and then not really acting like it. Names do not always tell the truth about the product. I can remember when growing up we had grape nuts.

I never found the grapes. I never found the nuts. But yet they were called grape nuts.

They didn't really testify to the product that was there. Jesus said to the church of Sardis, You have a name that you're alive, but really you're dead. You're called the house of Jacob, but are you really the house of Jacob? The United States is often called a Christian nation, but I think that that's arguable.

Are we truly a Christian nation? Our president has said that we are not a Christian nation anymore, and I was sort of upset when I first heard him say that, but I thought, You know, I'm afraid he's probably right. It's hard to just identify the nation as a Christian nation any longer. The prophet is speaking to the people who were trying to control the Spirit of God, and he asked them the question, Is the Spirit of the Lord

straightened or is it restricted? In verse 6, he speaks of them commanding certain of the prophets not to prophesy anymore.

They didn't want to hear what the Spirit of God was saying through the prophets. The prophets were telling them that they needed to change their ways. They were warning them that the path they were on was going to lead them to destruction.

They were being told that God was not pleased with their devising evil schemes, and at night they would carry them on during the daytime. At night they would make their plans. The next day they would try to carry them out.

But he said, God doesn't approve of your coveting another man's goods and seeking to take them by force. They were being warned that a nation that had lost its moral roots could not survive. It would surely demise and be destroyed.

The prophets were telling them that their lying, cheating, and drinking ways were not pleasing to God. But they didn't want to hear that message. They wanted to restrict the message that God was saying to them.

They didn't want to be rebuked for what they were doing. They wanted to sin without the feelings of guilt or remorse. They wanted people to accept their immoral practices and not to shame them for their perverse activities.

They did not want to remain in the closets, but wanted to publicly flaunt their evil practices down the streets of Hollywood. They were saying, don't tell us what God says. We will do our own thing.

And basically, they wanted to restrict the spirit of God and to silence his voice to their hearts. They desired that evil be called good and that they should call good evil. If you accepted their chosen ways, you were good.

That is liberal. But if you rejected their evil, then you were bad. You're a narrow-minded bigot.

If you wanted to teach your child in school good moral values, like the Ten Commandments, that was evil. But if they wanted to instruct them in how to use a condom, oh, well, that's good. In their eyes, the teaching of the children how to have safe sex was good, but teaching them abstinence was bad.

They wanted to restrict the message of God. They wanted to hear only the things that they wanted to hear. Verse 11 tells us that if a man walking in the spirit of falsehood is lying to them and saying, I will prophesy to you of the pleasures of wine and of strong drink, then everybody will say, my, what a great prophet this man is to the people.

We like what you say. You don't talk about sin. You don't talk about evil.

You don't talk about hell or things that you make. You talk about things that cause us to feel very positive and good when we go out of here. They would like to dictate to the spirit what to say to them rather than to hear what the spirit would say to the church.

Just put a reverend in front of the man's name. Let him say all of the evil practices that they are doing are acceptable to God, that God loves them too much to restrict them and to, you know, cause them to give up a lot of their practices. They'll be hailed as a great preacher, and they'll become very popular.

Don't tell them that the drinking is against the law of God and that the Bible says that they will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Just tell them that they have a physical inability to metabolize their alcohol. It is something in their genes, and God made you that way, and oh, it's interesting how men like to blame God for what they are and what they do.

They want to hear that God is so loving and so weak that he would condone anything and everything they wanted to do, even those things that were harmful and destroying them. He would never restrict them or seek to warn them of the dangers of their chosen lifestyles. In many circles, you're not considered qualified to speak God's word unless you've graduated with some degree from a seminary, which for the most part teach you that you can't trust the Bible as the word of God.

They restrict what God has said only to those parts with which they agree, and the rest they cast doubts concerning the authenticity. I believe that the spirit is not restricted as to whom and to how he can speak, that he speaks through whomever he desires and can. In the book of Amos, they were inquiring concerning his authority to speak in the name of the Lord.

He said to them when they were inquiring concerning his authority, he said, I was no prophet, neither was I the son of a prophet. I was just a farmer, and I gathered figs, and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Even the scholars and all in the day of Jesus, they were challenging him as he was teaching in the temple, and they said to Jesus, By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority? My blood sort of boils within me when I read of these men with their religious degrees and claiming that they have the knowledge of the scriptures that is superior to the knowledge that Jesus has.

Several years ago, I was called by a radio station in Los Angeles, and they wanted me to be on this talk show that they were planning. It was going to be a call-in talk show, and they wanted me to represent Christianity on the talk show, and so they set the whole thing up. As they opened the program, the master of ceremonies introduced Pastor Chuck Smith from Calvary Chapel, and then they introduced this professor of religion at USC, and they said we were going to take questions and ask questions and so forth and take questions from you listeners today.

And so she then sort of threw it over to this professor from USC who began to challenge, first of all, you know, the authenticity of the Bible. And so as he was doing it, I said, Wait a minute. I said, You know, you just mentioned that two Isaiahs.

I said the Bible only speaks of one Isaiah. Where do you get two Isaiahs? And there is this theory that there were two Isaiahs actually, and it's in the liberal theologians, because of the prophecies in the latter part of Isaiah were so accurate, so completely accurate, they thought man could not have written that before it happened. He had to write it after it happened.

And so they invented the second Isaiah, and they said that one wrote after the fact and after these things had already happened. And I said, How is it that, you know, Jesus only mentions one Isaiah and he quotes from both the beginning and the ending? You say that they were different Isaiahs. Jesus just quotes them as one.

And the professor said, Well, Jesus wasn't privileged to have all of the information that we have today. And I said, I beg your pardon, sir. Are you telling me that you know better concerning the authorship than Jesus knows? And he said, Well, he just didn't have all of the information that we have today.

And I said, Well, excuse me. And I hung up, and the host of the program called back and said, We lost connections. I said, No, we didn't.

I said, I closed the connections. I said, I can't speak with a person who knows more than Jesus about the Bible. Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted as to what we can do today? There's a lot of people that would restrict the Lord and saying, Well, the Lord doesn't do that anymore.

Can we blame the lack of power of the Holy Spirit in the church today on the Lord? Can we say, Well, the Lord is restricted the power of God's Spirit working in his church. Has God changed, or is it possible that we're the ones who have changed? Can we say with scriptural authority that God no longer wants the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be in operation in his church today? Could we be guilty of restricting the Spirit of God today? Can we look to man and his genius to win the world for Christ through programs rather than through the power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Is the church that began in the Spirit now going to be made perfect in the flesh? Could it be that we are the ones who are to blame for the lack of power rather than God? Look at the conditions that exist in our world today. After 2,000 years of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, fewer percentage of people believe in Jesus today than did believe back in the early church days.

Our world is wracked with wars, with terrorists, with wickedness. We had a pastor of a Calvary Chapel back east where the Hurricane Katrina had done so much damage. They had to evacuate from their house because of the approaching hurricane.

But after it was over, they drove back to their house and they were thrilled to see that the house was standing and that it had withstood the ravages of that terrible hurricane until they went into their house. And they found out that while they were gone, someone had gone in and taken all of their furniture, even the bathroom fixtures. And you think, who in the world could take advantage of people who are having to go through such devastation as the hurricane and use it as an opportunity to rip them off from all of the things that they had there in the house? Has the word of God lost its power to transform lives? Could it be that the teaching of moral principles through drama can cause people to really be changed because they've seen this clever little drama that's been developed to teach some kind of a childish proof of some lesson? Can a politically correct gospel that is designed not to offend anyone but rather provide for an hour of entertainment bring men out of the darkness of sin into the glorious light of Jesus Christ? It would seem that the time has come that Paul warned Timothy about when he exhorted Timothy, Preach the word.

Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust they will gather to themselves teachers to scratch their itching ears. They shall turn away from the truth and shall be turned unto entertaining stories.

Have we ceased warning men that are wicked that they'll be cast into hell and all of the nations that forget God because the idea of hell is held up to ridicule by our pagan world? Is the spirit of God strengthened? Have we restricted the work of the spirit because of the fear of man and a desire that we have to be popular? I agree with Charles Spurgeon who declared to his congregation, Let us return to the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit, into the fire, and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. Jesus said to the Church of Philadelphia, I have set before you an open door which no man can shut.

If we do not enter, who do we have to blame? Isaiah told us that in his day the people were saying, Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. And God responded to them, You wake up. How many times is that true? We're calling on God, Wake up, God.

And God answers, I'm awake. You're the one who is sleeping. The psalmist tells us in Psalm 78-41 they limited the Holy One of Israel through their unbelief.

And really, that is the problem with us, I'm afraid, that we are limiting what God wants to do. We are restricting that work that God would do if we would only be open to it. Is the spirit of the Lord strengthened? Are these His doings? I'm glad to tell you that the spirit of the Lord is not restricted, but He will work in the hearts and lives of those who desire Him, sincerely desire Him to work.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is still seeking and saving those who are lost, who will come to Him. He will still empower and use men and women to accomplish His eternal purposes in this world today.

How often we are conscious of our inabilities to deal with all of the issues that arise in the ministry, this vast ministry. With Paul, we often ask, and who is sufficient for these things? It is then that we are reminded that the spirit of God is not restricted and that our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of Christ. I may not be able to be up to the task, but He is.

When I look at the deteriorating condition of our society, I see the increased drug and gang problems. I see the social chaos. I feel so inept and incompetent to effect any great change.

How can you deal with the filth that comes out of Hollywood and the immoral conditions of our children today or with the corruption in our government? I feel so helpless, and that is the time that I am so thankful that there are no restrictions as to what the spirit of God can do. I may be weak and ineffectual, but not Him. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

It is true that the mountains of difficulty can be removed, but not by might nor by power, but, as God said, by my spirit, saith the Lord. So we can go forth with confidence to conquer over the world, the flesh, and the devil, because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Father, we thank you that you are not restricted, that you can work today even as you have worked in the past.

And, Lord, we just pray that you'll help us, that we might be in that condition, in that place where you can work freely through our lives, that work that you're wanting to do in our world today. So, Lord, bless, we pray, as we go out to face the conditions of this world, as we go out to face the enemy, and, Lord, as we go out to proclaim your truth. Thank you, Lord, for the power that you've given to us to do this.

And may we not, Lord, feel covered by our own fears or anxieties, but, Lord, may we go forth with boldness to tell the truth to the world that needs so desperately to hear it. We ask in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to pray with you today. If you have been limiting that work that God is wanting you to do in and through your life, if you have been restricting and you want to be more open to being used of God in these days, I would encourage you, when we're dismissed, come on down and just say, you know, would you pray for me? I find that I do feel this restriction in my life. I'm not doing as I should be doing for the Lord, and I just need His help.

I need His strength. I need the work of the Holy Spirit to just work through me very freely. They'll be happy to pray for you, and you can go forth experiencing the power of God and just being a real witness for our Lord Jesus Christ.

So may the Lord be with you. May He bless you. May He fill you with His Spirit, and may He enable you to be everything He would have you to be as you go forth in His name, sharing His truth and His love with a needy, needy world in which we live.

So God bless you, and go before you, and go with you, and guide you, and keep you in all things in His name for His glory. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. God bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24407.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/vrH4tNNS6aQ.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/is-the-lord-limited/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net